WILDSTORM RISING™ PART 2

W.I.L.D.C.A.T.S

COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS

ROBINSON • CHAREST • HUBBS

DC

20 MAY

MANY ARE THE GUISES HIGHTOWER HAS HAD AS HE'S CREPT THROUGH THE HISTORY BOOKS FROM SLY TRIUMPH TO SLYER STILL.

YET IT'S NOT WITHOUT IRONY, THE NOTABLE THINGS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE ALIEN WHILE IN HUMAN FORM. THE CHALLENGES HIGHTOWER SET HIMSELF THAT CAME TO PASS.

AS GENGHIS KHAN, HE LED HIS HORDE ACROSS A CONTINENT.

AS KING JOHN, HE CREATED THE MAGNA CARTA, BRINGING HIS KNIGHTS TO REIN AND BEGINNING THE REBIRTH OF MERRY OLDE ENGLAND AFTER RICHARD THE LION'S ERRANT CRUSADES.

AS JEAN LAFITTE, PIRATE, HE RULED THE SEAS WITH SWORD AND SAIL.

TODAY HIGHTOWER'S CHALLENGE IS A SIMPLE ONE. GET THE WILDC.A.T.S TO STOP FIGHTING HIM LONG ENOUGH TO TALK.

HALT OR --

NNNH

LISTEN TO ME!

KILL THE --

SO FAR IT'S PROVEN HARDER THEN ALL HIS PAST FEATS COMBINED.

JAMES ROBINSON
story

TRAVIS CHAREST
pencils

TROY HUBBS
inks

RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT
letters

JOE CHIODO
colors

Printed in Canada

WILL YOU *LISTEN* TO ME?!

NEGATIVE, ALIEN.

ZZZTT

NO TALK. *NOT* AFTER *ALL* WE'VE BEEN *THROUGH* BECAUSE OF *YOU.*

YOU MADE ME A *KILLER!* *BASTARD!*

AHH --

AND IN THE MELEE, A TELEPHONE RINGS. UNHEARD. UNNOTICED. UNANSWERED.

THE RINGING FINALLY STOPS.

YOU *PAY!*

KRRASHH

!

FOOLS! *ALL* I WANTED WAS TO *TALK.*

HE'S GONE. EVERYONE SPLIT UP.

HE MAY HAVE ***VANISHED,*** BUT HE ***CAN'T*** HIDE ***FOREVER.*** HE ***HAS*** TO BE ***SOMEWHERE*** ON ***THIS*** FLOOR.

BE ***CAREFUL.*** HE COULD BE ***ANY*** PLACE. BEHIND ***ANY CORNER.***

YEAH. ***INDEED.***

IN FACT, I THINK...

WHOA!

JACOB!

I HEARD YOU ***BREATHING.***

I ***THOUGHT --***

I HEARD YOU, ***TOO.***

I THOUGHT --

WELL, AS ***LONG*** AS ***NEITHER*** OF US ***HURT*** EACH OTHER, LET'S JUST ***KEEP*** ON...

... LOOKING FOR ***'TOWER.***

PRIS? ***SIR?*** ARE YOU ***BOTH*** ALL RIGHT?

OH MY GOD, JACOB.

THAT'S HIM, THERE! IT'S HIGHTOWER! I SENSE HIS DARK AURA. HE'S DISGUISED AS SPARTAN. SHOOT!

PRIS, WHAT ARE --

NO.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.

KRAKK

YOU MAY TALK LIKE VOODOO, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE HER SPEECH PATTERNS. NO. NOT TO MY COMPUTER SENSES.

LOOKS LIKE YOUR MACHINE IS SMARTER THAN YOU ARE, DOESN'T IT MARLOWE?

NOW CALL IT OFF AND DROP YOUR GUNS.

THERE HE --

HADRIAN!

HOLD UP, EVERYONE...

...HE'S GOT MARLOWE.

ALL I WANTED WAS TO *TALK.* NOW YOU'LL *HAVE* TO.

WHY DID YOU *WANT* ME? *HUNT* ME? *EARLIER,* AT THE *CODA* BASE?

YOU *ALMOST* KILLED *VOODOO.*

YOU *KIDNAPPED* MAUL. YOU *PROGRAMMED* HIM INTO A *MONSTER.*

HE *KILLED* A MEMBER OF *STORMWATCH.*

A *BIG MESS.*

AND A BIG FIGHT THAT *RESULTED* FROM IT.

ALL BECAUSE OF *YOU.*

I'M NO SAINT. NO. BUT *THAT...* I SWEAR, I HAD *NOTHING* TO DO WITH *THAT.*

BUT I'VE *HEARD* WHO *WAS* BEHIND IT. IF YOU'D SIMPLY *COME* TO ME AND ASKED, I'D HAVE *HAPPILY* TOLD YOU, *TOO.*

DEFILE.

HE'S A PLOTTER, AND *THIS* WAS ONE OF THOSE *PLOTS.* YOU AND *STORMWATCH* IN *BATTLE* WAS A *PART* OF IT.

OKAY. LET'S SAY WE *BELIEVE* YOU.

WHAT DO YOU *WANT* WITH US? EVEN *BEFORE* THIS, WE WERE *FAR* FROM *FRIENDS.*

I NEED YOUR *HELP.*

I'VE *LOCATED* ONE OF THE KEYS. *THE KEYS OF COMMAND.*

YOU KNOW WHAT *THAT* MEANS, IF *ANYBODY.*

IF I *DID,* I *NO LONGER* RECALL.

I *DO.* NOW I *KNOW* WHAT THAT IMAGE VOID SHOWED US *EARLIER* WAS.

NOW I *REMEMBER.* IT WAS ONE OF THE *THREE KEYS* NEEDED TO *POWER* THE *DAEMONITE COMMAND SHIP.* THE ONE THAT *PURSUED* US TO EARTH *SO LONG AGO.*

THE KEY. IT MEANS A *LOT* TO *ME.* THE *POSSESSION* OF IT *MAKES* ME A *DAEMONITE LORD* BY RIGHT.

YOU *AREN'T* ALREADY?

NO. I AM... *WAS,* AT LEAST... A *FOOT SOLDIER.* BUT WITH *SHAPE-SHIFTING ABILITY, MORE BRAINS* THAN MOST... AND, *ABOVE ALL, AMBITION.*

NOW THAT THIS *KEY* MAKES ME A *LORD,* I WANT TO *RETURN* TO MY *PLANET.*

TO DO SO, I NEED TO FIND THE *OTHER* KEYS AND OUR MISSING COMMAND SHIP. AND *THIS* KEY THAT I HAVE *ISN'T COMPLETE,* SO THE *REST* OF IT *NEEDS* TO BE FOUND, *TOO.*

CRAY.

THE *ARCHAEOLOGIST* WHO FOUND MY KEY... WHO WAS *ABOUT* TO *DISPLAY* IT AT THE *SMITHSONIAN*... THE *SITE* WHERE HE UNCOVERED THE KEY *MUST* BE WHERE THE SHIP IS *LOCATED.*

ONCE I HAVE THE KEY, I *NEED* TO GET THERE. AND I THINK YOU'LL *AGREE* IT'S IN *YOUR* INTERESTS TO *HELP* ME.

WHY? LET THE THINGS *STAY* LOST.

IF HE'S *LEARNED* THAT THE *LOST SITE* OF THE CRAFT HAS BECOME *KNOWN,* HE'LL HAVE *HIS* FORCES OUT HUNTING FOR THE *OTHER* KEYS, *TOO.*

YOU KNOW, *ZEALOT*... YOU KNOW THE *DEVASTATING POWER* ON THAT VESSEL. THE ARMAMENTS *ALONE.* THE *MIGHTY GENERATORS* THAT POWER THE CRAFT, *TOO.*

ANY OF THAT COULD BE *USED* TO *ANNIHILATE* THIS PLANET.

IF *I* GET TO IT *FIRST,* THEN *ALL* I WANT IS TO *TAKE* IT *AWAY* FROM HERE... *FAR* AWAY. BUT *DEFILE..?*

ALL *RIGHT.* LET'S SAY WE *HELP* YOU. LET'S *JUST* SAY. *WHERE* WOULD THE *OTHER* KEYS *BE?* YOU HAVE *PART* OF *ONE?* DEFILE HAS *ANOTHER?*

I *ASSUME* THAT THE SHIP'S *CAPTAIN* WAS THE LORD WHOSE *PETRIFIED HAND* HELD THE KEY *I* HAVE *NOW.* SO *THAT* LEAVES *ONE* OTHER *LORD* WHO'D HAVE A KEY. THE *MILITARY* LORD... THE ONE ON BOARD TO *LEAD* OUR *FORCES.*

IF *I* FOUND OUT ABOUT THIS KEY BEING *UNCOVERED,* THEN *SO* HAS *DEFILE.* ONE KEY WAS HELD BY EACH OF THE THREE RULING LORDS ON THE SHIP. DEFILE WAS THE *POLITICAL LORD. THEREFORE,* HE HAS *HIS* KEY *ALREADY.*

HELSPONT.

YOU *KILLED* HIM. SO THE *WHISPERS* SAY, AT LEAST. *WHEREVER* HE FELL -- THAT *MIGHT* BE WHERE HIS KEY IS *ALSO.*

WHY WOULD HE HAVE HAD IT *WITH* HIM?

I'VE *TOLD* YOU. THE KEYS DON'T *JUST* POWER THE CRAFT.

THEY'RE *ALSO* A DAEMONITE LORD'S *BADGE* OF *OFFICE.* A LORD WOULD *ALWAYS* HAVE IT ON HIS PERSON.

SO? YOU *SEE?* THE *FATE* OF THIS *PLANET* IS POSSIBLY AT *STAKE.*

ARE YOU MY *ALLIES?*

YES.

BUT BEFORE WE START, WE ***NEED*** TO MAKE ***SURE*** THE 'C.A.T.S ARE ***BATTLE-WORTHY*** AFTER THE ***FIGHT*** WITH STORMWATCH. THAT TOOK ITS ***TOLL*** ON ***EVERYONE.***

AFTERWARDS WE'LL MOBILIZE FOR THE ***HUNT.*** MAYBE SPLITTING INTO ***SMALLER TEAMS*** WOULD BE --

NO!

NO #$%@#*% WAY!

THIS IS ***CRAZY!*** ***WHAT*** IN THE ***HELL*** ARE WE ***DOING?!***

COLE, THIS IS *NOT* THE *TIME* FOR YOUR --

I'LL *TELL* YOU *WHAT* THIS *ISN'T* THE TIME FOR, *MARLOWE* -- FOR *SIDING* WITH THE *ENEMY.* AN *ALIEN* ENEMY... ONE WHO'D *ENSLAVE* THIS PLANET IF IT *SUITED* HIM *BEST.*

IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT *THIS* TIME HE WANTS TO HIGH-TAIL IT *OFF EARTH, INSTEAD.*

WE *NEED* TO *SHOULDER* OUR ARMS *THIS TIME,* COLE.

BE *COOL.*

COOL? LIKE THE WAY HE *COOLLY* STRUNG ME *UP* AND *TORTURED* ME?

COOL LIKE *THAT?*

LISTEN.

COOL LIKE HE *KILLED* MY FRIEND LONELY? WHAT ABOUT --

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. *YEAH.* MAYBE YOU *ARE.*

BUT WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE *BIGGER PICTURE,* HERE.

HE'S *RIGHT* ABOUT WHAT HE *SAYS.*

IF IT *ISN'T* HIM'N'*US* THAT *FIND* THE DAEMONITE SHIP, IT'S *GOING* TO BE *DEFILE* AND HIS *CREW. THEN* WHERE WILL THIS PLANET *BE,* EH?

JUST *LISTEN* TO *ME.*

WE *HAVE* TO *DO* THIS. *NO DEBATE.* MY DECISION IS *FINAL.*

OH, THAT'S HOW IT *IS,* HUH?

YEAH, THAT'S HOW IT IS.

AND IF *I* WERE *YOU,* MISTER CASH, I'D *START REMEMBERING* WHO GIVES THE *ORDERS* HERE.

YOU WANT TO GET *BOUNCED* FROM THE *C.A.T.S,* YOU'RE GOING ABOUT IT THE *RIGHT* WAY, FOR *SURE.*

BOUNCED?

WHAK

LET'S SEE HOW *YOU* BOUNCE, *SHORTY.*

SIR, ARE --

OH MY --

GRIFTER!

I *FORGET* SOMETIMES. IT'S *NOT* JUST THE *DAEMONITES* THAT ARE THE *ALIENS.* *ALL* OF YOU HAVE SOME *OFF-WORLD BLOOD* IN YOU.

ALL OF *YOU.*

ALIENS AND *HALF-BREEDS...*

...MAYBE I *MISJUDGED* THE *LOT* OF YOU.

OH, AND IF YOU *HADN'T* ALREADY *GUESSED*...

...I *QUIT!*

EARLIER. NOT TOO MUCH EARLIER. ABOUT TEN MINUTES...

SO, THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE JOURNAL'S GONE?

MY NOTES. I KNOW THE AREA ROUGHLY, BUT ONLY WITHIN A COUPLE OF MILES.

ACK

MY TEAM WAS CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE. I KEPT A LOG OF EACH DAY'S TRAVELS, BUT WITHOUT MY WRITINGS, I CAN'T QUITE REMEMBER DAY TO DAY... THE EXACT SPOT WHERE I FOUND THE ARTIFACT.

BUT ANYONE WHO HAD YOUR JOURNAL AND DECIPHERED YOUR SHORTHAND COULD FIND IT?

I...

...I SUPPOSE THEY COULD. YES.

THE ARTIFACT IS A KEY IS FROM ANOTHER PLANET, CHARLES. ANOTHER RACE, HERE ON EARTH.

WHERE YOU FOUND THE KEY... THAT'S WHERE THE DAEMONITES' SHIP WAS LOST.

IF THAT ALIEN BREED LOCATES THEIR CRAFT, WHO KNOWS WHAT HORRORS MAY UNFOLD?

THIS IS TOO BIG FOR ME ALONE. I'VE ALREADY CALLED A FRIEND, BUT I'M BRINGING IN MORE. A TEAM.

AND YOU TRUST THEM?

ONE OF THEM IS MY SISTER. I TRUST HER, AT LEAST.

BRAINNG BRAINNG BRAINNG BRAINNG BRAINNG BRAINNG BRAINNG

THAT'S ODD. NO ANSWER.

THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE IN THE HALO BUILDING.

"WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE STOPPING THEM FROM ANSWERING THE PHONE?"

I'LL TRY SOMEONE *ELSE.*

DIFFERENT PHONE?

DIFFERENT *TEAM.*

HELLO...

...SYNERGY?

SAVANT. YOU HAVEN'T USED OUR PRIVATE CHANNEL IN A *LONG TIME.*

TOO LONG... BUT THERE ISN'T TIME TO SWAP TALES. NOT OLD ONES, ANYWAY. YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STUFF HAPPENING NOW.

LATER. A MOMENT. A NEW TALE.

SO YOU *SEE...* I NEED *HELP.*

YES, I SEE. WHO KNOWS HOW MARLOWE'S INVOLVED IN THIS? AFTER WHAT JUST OCCURRED BETWEEN HIS TEAM AND MINE, I HAVE NO WAY OF EVEN GUESSING.

I'LL *SEND* AN *OPERATIVE* OVER. *HE'LL* TRANSPORT YOUR FRIEND TO A SAFE HOUSE AND HELP YOU *UNRAVEL* THIS PUZZLE.

QUICKLY! I SENSE TROUBLE!

AS FAST AS I *CAN.* OVER AND --

*BZZZ

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I *DON'T* THINK SYNERGY *NOTICED*, BUT AS SHE SIGNED OFF, THE LINE WENT *DEAD*. THE SIGNAL'S *SCRAMBLED*, OR SOMETHING.

THIS *ISN'T* RIGHT. I FEEL THERE'S --

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT...

...HAPPENS FAST...

...AND LOUD...

KKKRRRAAASSSHH

...AND FINAL.

THERE! TAKE 'EM *DOWN.*

SHARP AND *CLEAN.*

THE MERCS!

RUN, CHARLES. GET --

UNNH!

AH. MY LITTLE *ROSE.*

HOW *FARES* YOUR DAY?

WHO...

...WHO... ARE *YOU?* NOT A MERC.

THE *NAME,* FAWN...

...IS MISTER WHITE.

FIVE DOLLAR ROOM.
TWO DOLLAR BOTTLE.
ALL I NEED FOR NOW.
TRY TO THINK THINGS THROUGH. WHY I DID WHAT I DID.
CRAZY.
DUMB.
MAKES ME ASK MYSELF...
...DID I SCREW UP? OR DID I DO WHAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE A LONG TIME AGO?
DROPPING THE ARROGANT LITTLE SO-AND-SO SURE FELT GOOD.
BUT NOW...
...WHAT HAVE I GOT NOW?
ZEALOT? NO. I LOSE THE 'C.A.T.S, I LOSE HER.
I LOSE THE CHANCE IT COULD EVER AGAIN BE LIKE IT WAS BETWEEN US ONCE.
BUT NO GOOD CAN COME OUT OF HIGHTOWER BEING IN WITH THE TEAM. I'M SURE OF IT!
NO. NO GOOD.
AND I'VE STILL GOT SCARS THAT HURT FROM THE LAST TIME HIM AND ME MAMBOED.
BUT I DO RECALL THAT KEY. YEAH. KEPT QUIET WHEN VOID FLASHED THE IMAGE FOR US ALL, BUT SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT --
YEAH. YEAH.
HE HAS THE OTHER PIECE OF THE KEY... PICKED IT UP AS A SOUVENIR IN NICARAGUA.
CRAY... DEATHBLOW.
GOTTA FIND HIM... HELP HIM. GOTTA... GOTTA --
MAN. I GOTTA GET SOME COFFEE IN ME, IS THE FIRST THING. FOR SURE.

TELL ME!
TELL ME!
TELL ME!
WHERE DID YOU FIND THE KEY?!
HE DID. ALREADY! NICARAGUA. DON'T KEEP HITTING HIM, WHITE.
LEAVE HIM. DO WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT TO DO TO ME, INSTEAD.
KRAK
TO YOUR SUPER-HARD, INVULNERABLE BODY, SAVANT? NOW WHERE WOULD BE THE FUN IN THAT?
BESIDES, I NEED THE EXACT LOCATION IN NICARAGUA, IF MY LORD DEFILE IS GOING TO FIND THAT SHIP, I NEED THE PRECISE COORDINATES.
AND UNTIL THE MORTAL SPITS THEM OUT, I'M GOING TO KEEP RIGHT ON HURTING HIM.
NO, SAVANT, WE'LL GET TO YOU LATER. KILLING YOU... A KHERUBIM... REQUIRES AN ARTIST'S FLAIR.
IS THAT THE CASE?
WHAK

WELL, HERE I AM...

... GRAB A PAINT BRUSH.

MAJESTIC!

THAT'S MISTER MAJESTIC TO YOU COWARDS!

CRIKKLL

CRAKKL

MAJ, LOOK OUT, SHE'S GOING TO --

BE UNSUCCESSFUL IN WHATEVER SHE ATTEMPTS!

GHRHH

SHUK

A KHERUBIM LORD.

FIERCE AND POWERFUL.

I DELIGHT.

A WORTHY FOE, AT LAST.

REGARDS. FROM ONE "MISTER" TO ANOTHER.

SHAZOOM

CHANG

BAD SHOT.

AHHH

THDD

MERELY A FEINT...

... IN PREPARATION FOR THIS!

ARRHHH!

CHARGD

IS THAT THE *BEST* YOU CAN *DO?*

ALL THAT TALK. SUCH *GRAND BOASTS.*

AND *THEN* THIS IS THE *BEST* YOU CAN *MUSTER?*

YOU'RE A *JOKE,* WHITE.

AND *NOT* A VERY *FUNNY* ONE.

ERRH

LOOKS LIKE HE *AIN'T* THE *ONLY* TALKER, *FANCYPANTS.*

YOU GAVE ME *YOUR* BEST, AND I'M *BACK* FROM IT.

NOW YOU'RE GOING *DOWN!*

YOU'RE *WRONG* ABOUT *EARLIER* BEING MY *BEST.*

THIS IS!

THWAK

MAJESTIC, ARE YOU --

FINE, FINE. *WHERE'S* WHITE?!

GONE IN THE *SMOKE.*

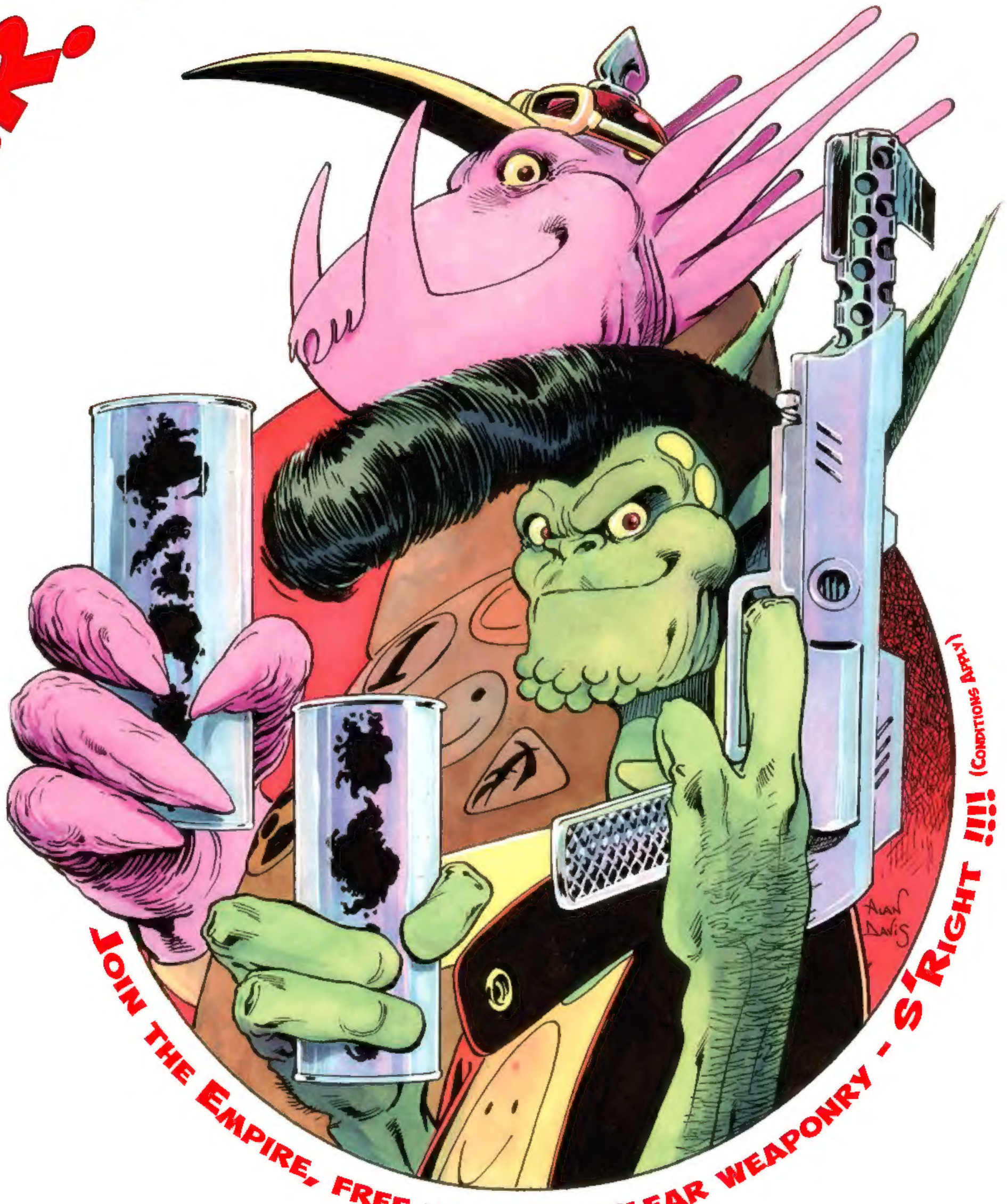
I'LL *LOOK* FOR HIM... PERHAPS.

UNHAND THAT WOMAN, *VILLAIN!...*

WHAT IN --

... AND PREPARE TO FIGHT!

D.R. & QUINCH



JOIN THE EMPIRE, FREE THERMONUCLEAR WEAPONRY - S'RIGHT !!!! (CONDITIONS APPLY)

K6 NW